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THE ROAD & LIFE



MARION COUTHOUY SMITH



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THE
ROAD
OF
LIFE

The Road of Life

And Other Poems

By

MARION COUTHOUY SMITH

Author of

“The Electric Spirit and Other Poems,” etc.

1909

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Contents

Cried in the Market Place . . . Introduction

	<i>Page.</i>
The Road of Life	11
The Charm Invincible	17
Rhymes of an Old Home	18
Our Hope	20
Old Melodies	21
The Fire-Fly	23
Without End	24
The Conquering Thrust	25
In Old Haunts	26
The Quest of Liberty	27
A Prayer	31
The Code of the Strong	32
The Wires	33
Straight to the Sun	35
Song of the Souls that Failed	36
The Rulers	37
Susan B. Anthony	38
The City Ideal	39
The Bright Eyes of Danger	40
The Fire Engines	42
The Wireless Message	43
Are We So Old?	44
The Call Supreme	46
A Vision of Flight	47
The Leaves	49
Telephone Song	50
The Song of the Easter Lilies	51

Cried in the Market Place

*Songs, songs,
Who'll hear my songs?
Songs in the forest made,
To the voluble soft music
Of the rustling glade.*

THEY are woven of wind-voices,
And the grave speech of trees,
And bird-notes, rhyming, chiming,
Through long, slow harmonies.

They were born in little bowers
Of deep enfolding green,
Where shadows lie forever,
And sun-rays creep between.

They were cradled to the swaying
Of fern and underbrush,
Where stirrings swift, and glidings,
Break faintly through the hush.

They are bright with dews of morning,
And cold with twilight rain,
Impassioned with the years that die,
And Springs that come again.

*Songs, songs,
Who'll hear my songs?
Who'll heed their tender wiles?
Bartered for a friendly word,
For passing tears and smiles.*

The Road of Life

Scene.—A hillside road in Summer.

Persons.—A mother and daughter, walking slowly.

DAUGHTER:

How calm, how glad, how wonderfully fair!
The leaves are moving like a quiet heart,
With joy too deep for passion. Yet, behold!
There wakes a sudden, swift, scent-laden wind,
And now they rock and glitter in the sun,
And quiver in a ripple of ecstasy.
The world is full of life, yet how serene!
My mother, you are sure our way is here?
This is the Road of Life?

MOTHER:

Yes, I am sure.

DAUGHTER:

Yet there are dangers in the way, I know,—
Sorrow, and pain and conflict. So they say.

MOTHER (*hesitating*):

Perhaps—they will not come.

DAUGHTER (*lightly*):

Oh, they must come;
They come to all, we know. I do not fear,
For I am guarded on all sides by Love,
And Love is strong!

MOTHER:

To guard? Love strong to guard?

DAUGHTER:

Why, Love's the strongest guard!

The Road of Life

—Continued

MOTHER:

Yes, Love is strong. (*aside*)
So strong to suffer, but so weak to guard!

DAUGHTER:

Mother, you're weary; sit and rest awhile.
I will go forward; I would look ahead.

MOTHER:

No, not ahead—look back! See how the hills
Yet keep the rapture of the morning sun.

DAUGHTER:

But I have seen it earlier—fairer still.
I go to see the road, beyond that bend,
There, in the shadow of the musing wood.

MOTHER:

Go, then, and I will rest. (*Daughter goes forward*)
I need not fear.

She will see naught upon the sunny road
But light, and waving shadows, and small flowers
That smile amid the grass. It is too soon!

(*The mother rests. A long silence. The daughter returns hastily, a startled look in her eyes.*)

DAUGHTER:

Mother!—oh, Mother!

MOTHER (*starting up*):

Daughter! What is this?

DAUGHTER:

Nothing—I think—to fear! But I have seen—
(No, do not fear!)—a figure by the road,
Seated, so still, between two jutting rocks,
In the deep shadow of the breathing trees.
She was so still! She did not speak—and yet—

The Road of Life

—Continued

MOTHER:

Child, did you see her eyes?

DAUGHTER:

I saw her eyes;

And therefore, though she sat so still, I feared!

MOTHER:

Was she so terrible?

DAUGHTER:

Not terrible—

And yet, she *could* be terrible! Such eyes!

So sad, so stern—nay, so inexorable!

Mother, you know her?—For I have a thought—

MOTHER:

I—cannot tell—

DAUGHTER:

I think—that she is Death!

MOTHER:

I cannot tell! Death is not always stern.

DAUGHTER:

I know she is not Sorrow, nor yet Pain,

For I have seen them both.

MOTHER (*musingly*):

She is not Love,

For Love looks sweetly in the eyes of Youth,

Whatever change comes after.

DAUGHTER:

Do you know her?

MOTHER:

I cannot tell! I know the face of Death.

DAUGHTER:

And this, I'm sure, is Death. Oh, come and see!

The Road of Life

—Continued

MOTHER (*in fear*):

No, no, my child! It is not Death.

DAUGHTER:

It must be!

What other could look so? I do not fear her!

Come, come and see!

MOTHER:

Dear heart, it is not Death!

(They advance along the road into the shadow of the wood, walking quickly, in silence. The daughter suddenly stops and points ahead, to the right. The Figure appears. They look at it, still silent.)

DAUGHTER (*whispering*):

See, how she sits—her hands upon her knees,

Motionless, motionless—yet so alert,

As one who holds in leash a fateful power.

Look at her eyes! (*A pause*)

Speak, Mother; do you know her?

MOTHER:

I know her!

DAUGHTER:

Tell me, tell me! Is it Death?

MOTHER:

No!

DAUGHTER:

Is it Sorrow? Can she be so stern?

MOTHER:

'Tis she who cradles Sorrow.

DAUGHTER:

That means Death!

The Road of Life

—Continued

MOTHER:

No, no, dear heart! God help us,—*she is Life!*

DAUGHTER:

Life! With such brows—such eyes!

MOTHER:

She looked in yours?

DAUGHTER:

Compellingly,—as she should say, “I wait!”

MOTHER:

Aye, she will wait!—Come back again and rest.

(They turn)

DAUGHTER:

She has a charm about her! Now I see
How dull I was, to say that she was Death.
She is ferocious; yet she can be sweet.
Oh, I must know her! Yet—I am afraid.

MOTHER:

I wish you had not seen her eyes, so soon.

DAUGHTER:

I had no choice. And I must go with her,
Soon, very soon. She will not let me pass;
She will rise up, and walk along with me.
This is the Road of Life; you know it, Mother!
And you—you, too—have looked into her eyes.

MOTHER:

Oh, long ago! Oh, very long ago!

DAUGHTER:

You know, then; tell me: Is there aught to fear?

MOTHER:

To fear! For you? Dear love, I—cannot—tell!

The Road of Life

—Continued

DAUGHTER:

But tell me all you know.

MOTHER:

I do not know!

'Tis not the same for all.

DAUGHTER:

You think, with me

She may be gentle?

MOTHER:

Oh, she may! She—*will!*

DAUGHTER:

You are not sure she will?

MOTHER:

I am—not sure!

DAUGHTER:

But she is Life, not Death! I do not fear.

This is the Road of Life, and it is sweet

And very fair!

MOTHER:

Yes; very sweet and fair.

DAUGHTER:

Oh, I shall love her, after all, I am sure!

She is so strong, so glorious! And her eyes—

I see them in the dusk and in the light,

And I shall see them always! Dearest Mother,

Why do you fear?

MOTHER:

I? Nay, I do not fear.

She will be gentle; but I only wish

You had not looked, so soon, into her eyes!

The Charm Invincible

APHOLD me on the danger-crest of life,
O Mother City! Clasp me in thine arms;
Enthral me with thy wild, compelling charms;
Sting me with rapture, buffet me with strife.

Lure and repel me; snatch my heart to thee;
Fling me the challenge of thy restless eyes;
Now, let me hate thee—then, with swift surprise,
Love thee again, and nevermore be free!

Through the pure quiet of the great, still nights,
Thy life breaks out,—thy harsh reverberant songs,
The pulsing cadence of thy tramping throngs;
The opulent glitter of thy myriad lights.

My heart is lifted on thy buoyant tides,
Thrilled by thy cries of revelry and woe.
The far hills call me, but I may not go;
The woods invite me,—but thy spell abides.

So let me know thy blessing and thy ban,
And find my soul reflected in thy face.
For all the secret of thy passionate grace
Is but the magic of the heart of man.

Rhymes of an Old Home

I.

THE PASSER-BY

IN a cold, drifting rain,
On a dreary night,
I went hurrying by a house
With windows all alight;
Hurrying to my shelter
At a strange fireside,
I passed by the old home,
Where my mother died.

There was my own room,
Where I dwelt for years,
Harbor of uncounted dreams,
Of unreckoned tears;
Ah, from its every corner
Shall not ghosts arise,
Moaning low to alien ears,
Frighting alien eyes?

In the rain, in the night,
Sped I past the place,
The lights of a stranger's home
Shining in my face;
With me walked the dead days,
The woes forever gone,—
And the old house seemed to sigh,
As I hastened on.

Rhymes of an Old Home

—Continued

II.

THE NEW HOUSEHOLDER

Who sits under my roof-tree?
One whom I have not known;
He dug not the old foundations,
He laid not a single stone;
Where a thousand echoes greet me,
He hears no word nor breath,
And the walls that to me are lettered,
To him are as blank as death.

Here I come as a stranger,
Faring at his behest;
Here he rules as the master,
Greeting a haunted guest;
For, as I sit by his fireside,
Faintly I see and hear
The light of a by-gone presence,
The call of an old-time cheer.

Here I wept in the darkness,
(Hark, how the old griefs cry!)
Here she lay in her beauty,
She who can never die.
Aye, though he pay the purchase,
I have the right divine!
His is the shell—the shadow,—
The soul of the house is mine.

Our Hope

WHAT is our hope? Re-birth to some new strife?
Dropping this dear and long-familiar life,
As some rejected garment, worn and old,
With all its loves, its joys, its griefs untold;
Leaving forever memory's precious store
As driftwood, on some vast and dreary shore;
Re-entering earth, an alien from the dead,
Bewildered still, with untried paths to tread?
Were this our hope, with love and memory lost,
What bliss remote could pay the bitter cost?

This is our hope: To know some wider range
Of conscious progress and exultant change;
Yet to look back, with clear and tender gaze,
On this blind life,—its rough and weary ways,
Its struggles, and its dark besetting fears,
Its ecstasy, its passion, and its tears;
And oh! to fall again on some dear breast
Once stilled in moveless calm, in icy rest;
To feel its warmth; to see, with glad surprise,
The light rekindled in sweet, faithful eyes;
This is our hope, and worth our sternest strife,
Our years of longing prayer,—for this is life!

Old Melodies

HER thin white fingers wandered among the yellowing
keys,

Now with a weary slowness, now with the old-time
ease;

The tunes were quaint and tender, like ancient tales
oft told,

For they were songs of bygone years, and she was
growing old.

The children flocked about her; they loved to hear
her play;

For all was new and sweet to them, and every song
was gay.

They were her heart's companions, for they could
understand;

The dear old music spoke to them beneath her trem-
bling hand.

But we, no longer children, between her day and
theirs,

Had danced to other measures, and thrilled to newer
airs;

We heard with smiles indulgent, but we were slow to
praise

The simple tunes that brought to her the joy of dis-
tant days.

Old Melodies

—Continued

They brought the scent of springtime, the tap of dancing feet,

The dream that blossomed in her heart when youth
and love were sweet;

Each cadence had its story, each plaintive, soft refrain
Awoke the chimes of memory, the call of bliss or pain.

So, with her thin white fingers, she touched the yellow-
ing keys,

And pleased the listening children with old-time melodies;

And we, who smiled to hear them, remember now
with tears

The tones that will not sound again through all the
silent years.

The Fire-fly

BRIGHT on the summer dark,
Fretting the silver night,
Flashes thy trailing spark,
Thou flower of light.

Where the white day-stars sleep,
Folded in fragrant sod,
Gay vigil dost thou keep,
Small torch of God.

Infinite light, that wakes
In the broad flame of day,
Sparkles in thee, and breaks
In starry spray.

Jester of royal night,
Sport of the festal moon,
Thy glancing, elfish flight
Passes with June.

Brood that an hour destroys,
Mocking the splendid sky,—
Type of a thousand joys,
Flicker and die!

Without End

AS in a vision I seemed to see
That the earth was weary, and very old,
And the tale of the ages well-nigh told;
And hints of sinister prophecy
Breathed of an end that soon should be.
I saw the blight of a final change,
When Spring came halting, sad and slow;
When age was silent, and youth was strange,
And the lights of hope burned low.
Yet there, beneath cold twilight skies,
On a pale space of rock and sand,
Sat two alone, with shining eyes,
And warm hand locked in hand;
And with brave cadence, clear and strong,
Broke from the lover's lips a song:
*Dearest, the world is all made new for us,
Dreams of the ages all come true for us,
Nothing is left to fear!
Never, in all the days before us,
Sang the birds with so sweet a chorus,
Never was Spring so dear.*
*Love, all mine, while the years roll over us,
Mine, when the snows of death shall cover us,
Mine, while the soul shall be!
Mine, though the last June yield her flowers;
Dearest, through immemorial hours
None have been loved like thee!*
So, as they sat, the immortal night
Wrapped the old earth in still delight
And in the blue deep, clear and far,
Sparkled a new-born star.

The Conquering Thrust

WHAT wound smote deepest to the mightiest Heart
That ever knew earth's loving and earth's pain?
The thrust of Judas, who for trivial gain
Flung Heaven behind him, and bade hope depart?
The surging crowd's mad rage? The aimless dart
Of swift, unthinking mockery, light and vain?

All these, in sooth, might that great Heart disdain,
While Love, though mute and helpless, bore its part.
But when Love shrank and failed, and three times
played

The dastard, was not this the sorest blow?
Oh, not the sordid spirit that betrayed,
Not the stern captor, nor the taunting foe,
But he who flinched—the friend who was afraid—
Wrung from those kingly eyes the appeal of woe!

In Old Haunts

HERE, in old haunts, your dear remembered graces,
Like summer blooms returning, come to view;
My heart builds shrines along the wayside places
Where I have been with you.

The Quest of Liberty

(FOREWORD)

*She stands on guard above the wave,
Immortal Liberty!
Her home and kingdom, or her grave,
This mighty land must be.*

*The nation lies, serenely great,
Before her steadfast gaze,—
The stronghold of her royal state,
Hope of her future days.*

*No Delphic lips her fate foretell,
Nor hint of what shall be;
A People's soul must weave the spell
Of that high destiny.*

(LIBERTY SPEAKS)

IN the day of the first creation
I woke in the breast of man
The dream of an unborn nation,
The wraith of a formless plan.
Unknown, and not yet desired,
I dawned like a flickering star,
Till the soul of the race aspired
To the vision faint and far.

The Quest of Liberty

—Continued

Through the dusk of long, slow ages,
I waxed both fair and strong,
And the great, sad hearts of the sages
Throbbled to my fitful song;
In dreams of the shackled toilers
My siren form shone forth;
And I rode in the ranks of the spoilers,
The white, fierce hordes of the North.

Where untamed lips have named me,
Their cry was of frenzied ire;
Their hot, mad deeds have shamed me,
And marked me with blood and fire.
And when strong souls pursued me,
When noblest works were wrought,
I have broken the hearts that wooed me,
I have mocked the hopes that sought.

I am followed in pain and error,
Worshipped with sighs and tears,
In the madness of crime and error,
The anguish of wasted years;
As the sea-god's singing daughters,
I have lured men's souls to death,
While, sunk as in swirling waters,
They praised me with failing breath.

They have pictured in haunted vision
My stern, yet radiant face;
They have moulded in shapes Elysian
The lines of my splendid grace;

The Quest of Liberty

—Continued

And now, in the golden morning
Of a strong, prophetic age,
I have dropped my mask of scorning,
I have smiled on my heritage.

They have seen at last, they have known me,
No longer veiled and far;
The opening mists have shown me
Fair as a deathless star!
For I come to the free-born races
Not by their pride and strife,
But drawn by their tenderer graces,
By love, and the selfless life.

They shall seize my fleeting beauty,
They shall crown my royal youth;
But the leash on my wrist is Duty,
The light on my brow is Truth.
Though the path I tread be hidden,
Though my rule no force may win,—
I shall come to the throne unbidden
When Love shall lead me in!

(THE NATION SPEAKS)

Spirit of Freedom! have we heard thy voice?
We who were vowed to thee in toil and strife,—
Have we not won the secret of thy life?
Are we not still the people of thy choice?

The Quest of Liberty

—Continued

Have we not followed thee through fire and blood?
Ev'n to the verge of failure and of shame?
Faced wound and capture—perished in thy name—
Spared in thy service neither gold nor blood?

Lo, we have loosed the red chain of the slave,
Scorned crown and kingship, stood to rank and
power;
Dreamed of thee, loved thee, ev'n in that dark hour
When men have shamed the freedom that we gave.

If we have kept the letter of thy word,
Yet missed the spirit, then our hearts shall know
Thy stern rebuke. But shall we lose thee so?
Nay! though to bitter ruth our souls be stirred.

Hope of the ages! Guerdon of man's life!
Thy voice must reach us, through all warring
sounds;
On all our pride and glory fix thy bounds,
And by thy calm restraint control our strife.

Let not our myriads worship thee in vain;
But let us know thee, in our chastened hearts,
Consort of Law, and mother of great Arts,
But subject still to Love's immortal reign.

We are thine own; and never are we blest—
We, to whose hope the gracious dream was given—
Till all be won for which our souls have striven,
And in thy perfect sovereignty we rest.

FATHER of all who live,
Lord of our destiny,
Choose from the ranks of the brave, I pray,
The friend Thou giv'st to me!

From those who have striven with Thee,
And have met Thee face to face,
In the might of Thine awful Fatherhood,
Thy stern, unsparing grace.

From those who have fought and won,
And lightly worn the crown,
Counting praise as a boon unsought,
Scorning the deed's renown.

From those who have fought and lost,
And have wrested joy and power
From the very hands of the conquering foe,
In the bitter, breathless hour.

From those who, in lonely days,
In darkness and defeat,
Have stood to fate with a dauntless will,
In the strong soul's last retreat.

Giver of gracious gifts,
Lord of the life to be!
Choose, I pray, from the ranks of the brave,
The friend Thou giv'st to me.

The Code of the Strong

DO thy work without earthly hope,
Do thy work without dream of cheer;
Both shall find thee, in life's great scope,
So thou harbor not hate nor fear.

Look in the face of death each day;
Only so shalt thou master life;
When he beckons thee, go thy way
Out of the toil and dust and strife; .

Go alone, as thou needs must go,
On, where the unknown pathway lies;
Only God and thy soul shall know
Where the star of thy life shall rise.

Keep thy heart without hate or fear,
Shrink not, pause not, for pain or strife,
Strive not, scheme not, for love or cheer;
Only so shalt thou capture life.

WE are the nerves of the world,
The threads of fate are we,
Whether in coil and spiral curled,
Or flung over land and sea;
From hoards of the ages brought,
The great rocks yield our life;
With flame and force is our being wrought,
With throes of toil and strife.

Over the whole round globe
Our mighty web is spun,
Woven out, as a gleaming robe,
In shimmer of snow and sun;
Drawn from the clods of earth
By a mounting, hot desire,
We come, to circle its utmost girth
With meshes of prisoned fire.

We span the bounds of space
With burning, outstretched hands;
The speech and soul of a wakening race
Ride on our vivid strands;
We start the viewless waves,
Bearing their hidden song,
And toss them down through our slender staves
To the heart of a waiting throng.

The Wires

—*Continued*

We lift the torch of light;
We drive the wheels of power;
Our careless force, through the day and night,
Smites down the opposing hour;
We make the shining way
On which man's word may fare;
He gives his hope to our vibrant sway,
His dream to our paths of air.

We are the harp of the world,
The chords of life are we;
Through us the song of the sphere is hurled
In a storm of harmony;
Forged in the sullen deeps,
Strung through the void above,
We ring with a note that never sleeps,—
The note of a world-wide love.

Straight to the Sun

SPEED you straight to the sun,
Wings of my deepest desire;
What though you perish in fire,
So you have striven and won.

What though you be afraid,
Heart of my deepest desire,
So only you still aspire,
So only you have not stayed!

What if you reach no goal?
But, 'mid the stars in flight,
You drop as a moth from the light,
And fall, like a banished soul?

You shall be marked of *One*,
Heart of my deepest desire;
Failing, perishing, scorched by the fire,
Speed you straight to the sun.

Song of the Souls That Failed

WE come from the wind-swept valleys,
Where the strong ranks clash in might;
Where the broken rear-guard rallies
For its last and losing fight;
From the roaring streets and highways,
Where the mad crowds move abreast,
We come to the wooded by-ways
To cover our grief, and rest.

Not ours the ban of the coward,
Not ours is the idler's shame;
If we sink at last, o'erpowered,
Will ye whelm us with scorn or blame?
We have seen the goal, and have striven,
As they strive who win or die;
We were burdened and harshly driven,
And the swift feet passed us by.

When we hear the plaudits' thunder,
And thrill to the victors' shout,
We envy them not, nor wonder
At the fate that cast us out;
For we hear one music only,
The sweet, far voice that calls
To the dauntless soul, and lonely,
Who fights to the end, and falls.

We come—outworn and weary—
The unnamed hosts of life;
Long was our march, and dreary,
Fruitless and long our strife;
Out from the dust and the riot,
From the lost, yet glorious quest,
We come to the vales of quiet,
To cover our grief, and rest.

STRENGTHEN, O Sovereign Lord, the souls that
bear,

Unmoved, the heavier burdens of the race;
Who fix the fate of nations by the grace
Of strong, irrevocable choice, and dare,
So choosing, Thy supernal power to share;
Who stand erect and smiling in their place,
And lift, with pure, proud hands, before Thy face
Their solemn load of judgment and of care.

Ah, not alone to kings and prophets Thou
Didst grant of old the sterner gifts of fate.
That wreath of thorn was set on Lincoln's brow,—
On Washington's; nor is our age too late
For the clear vision, the unswerving vow,
The brave and sorrowing lordship of the great.

Susan B. Anthony

GOD and thy great heart drove thee to the breach
Where raged the unequal war,—that narrow space
Where the deep ranks of Custom held their place.
There thou and thy brave Few spake each to each
In those high words that only strife can teach;
And there was shown thy sweet commanding grace,
The starlike glory of thy steadfast face,
The martial music of thy dauntless speech.

The soul of woman, rising at thy will,
Sees through a dream the freedom she should know,
A freedom greatly wooed, reluctant still,
And moving near with footsteps grave and slow.
Then, to thy rest, brave Soul! and triumph so;
The awakened race thy purpose shall fulfill.

The City Ideal

OVER the white, shining river, out on its uttermost rim,
Rises a marvelous city, jeweled with fugitive
gleams,
Vested in silvery vapors, stately and silent and dim,
City of shadowy towers, city of wonder and
dreams.

Darkness may dwell in the mazes under her spires and
domes,
Down in her inmost recesses evil may shrink from
the light;
Sorrow and struggle and toil may be rife in her mani-
fold homes;
Clamor and clangor and tumult may startle the day
and the night.

Yet in her beauty behold her! Silent, gigantic, serene,
Set like a vast musing goddess, shrined by the sky
and the bay,
Fair with a splendor prophetic, strong with a purpose
unseen,—
This is her image immortal, this is the soul of her
clay.

The Bright Eyes of Danger

BRIGHT eyes that draw me on
To the brink of flood or fire,
Now flashing near—now gone;
Spurring to keen desire,—
Goading to mad endeavor,
Charm me, allure me, forever!
Now as the eyes of a maid,
Drooping, and half-afraid,
Searching, as veiled eyes can,
The very heart of a man;
Vanishing, fading—and then,
Drawing closer, closer again,
With a sudden flaming grace,
To stare me full in the face;
Now, with a daring boast,
Laughing all fear aside;
Now as the eyes of a ghost,
Haggard, and frozen wide,
Fixed in horror and dread;
Eyes, however ye gleam,
Ye are the lights of my dream,
Wild as the marsh-fires,
Flitting and dancing ahead!

So let me follow, follow,
Over all lands of the world;
The deserts, barren and hollow,
Where the waste rocks are hurled;
The swirling floods of the sea,
The fields of storm and strife;

The Bright Eyes of Danger

—Continued

Wherever the soul rides free
On a hazard of death or life;
Wherever a man may go
For chances of bliss or woe,
Waiting the turn of the hour,
Watchful, swift, debonair,
Borne on the tides of power,
Finding all fortunes fair;
There let me roam or bide,
To stress and toil no stranger;
There let me follow my guide,
The soul-lit eyes of danger—
Let me woo, as a man may woo his bride,
The great, wild heart of danger!

The Fire-Engines

HARK! As with clang! clang! clang! the iterant bell
Strikes its imperial note, "Make way! Make
way!"

It holds the clamorous city with its spell
Of instant dread; and dominates the day.
Now through the startled street
The rattling ladders swing, thunder the galloping feet;
And in one wave of force
The bands of succor speed upon their course.

A man sits there; the reins within his hold
Are as the strands of fate; his watchful gaze,
Tense and unswerving, fronts the dizzying maze
Of moving life before his speed unrolled;
While his strong shoulders sway as if in scorn
Of that relentless peril to which his life is sworn.

The fight is on! Man's soul against the fire,
In hot, exultant ire,
Flame against flame—two giant powers at bay.
Hark! how the distant clangor dies away!
Hail to you, men, that hurtle to the strife!
Whether in death or life,
You win the day!

The Wireless Message

I NTO the void we send it;
Sprites of the air, attend it!
Soul of the wind, give heed!
Greet it from peak and hollow,
Mad storms that cannot follow,
Pierced by its mocking speed.

The heart of man shall bless it,
The waiting wires caress it,—
Word that in silence sings;
Borne where no pathway traces
The great wind-peopled spaces,
On viewless, vibrant wings.

Are We So Old?

*"The brain is an ember,
The blood is cold;
My heart, remember,
We both are old!"*

—Edmund Gosse.

HEART, are we both so old?
Look in the glass and see!
See how the wrinkles fold
Where fresh smiles used to be;
Is not the snow in the hair?
The cloud in the eager eyes?
Heart, shall we not beware
Age, and its sad surprise?

Are we so old, my heart?
Look to thyself, and see;
Sorrow would fain take part
With years, to conquer thee.
Strength is not thine to yearn
Even for the hopes of yore;
Heart, shall the Spring's return
Move thee to joy no more?

Are We So Old?

—Continued

So, we are old, my heart!

Look on the world, and see.

Nay, do thy pulses start?

Slaves of the Spring are we?

Under the budding boughs,

See how young Love comes near;

New and untried his vows;

Heart, are not ours as dear?

Heart, are we then so old?

Look in Love's face, and see!

Through all his lips withhold,

His soul yet speaks to thee.

Though beyond earth's recall

His first sweet fancies are,

Let the poor blossoms fall!

Life is an ageless star.

The Call Supreme

WE toil to the goal, strong-hearted, giving nor sight nor
heed

To Love, as he goes before us, flitting with careless
speed;

Sudden he turns in the pathway, smiling—"How
fares the day?"

And naught is left for the striving—only to go his
way!

A Vision of Flight

WHERE the west wind holds dominion
O'er the realm of the upper air,
In a fold of his beating pinion,
On his wide wild path we fare.

With a cloud of your shining tresses
He has veiled your eager sight,
And, stung by his rude caresses,
Your cheek burns red and bright.

From the lair of the sleeping thunder,
Through the trail of sunset dyes,
When the gleaming sea crawls under,
Eastward our swift car flies;

With arrowy sweep it issues
Forth to clear halls of air,
Parting the purple tissues
Of woven vapors fair;

Till the blue lies wide around us,
Sun-kissed and sapphire-bright,
Where no set path has bound us,
And the wind is with our flight.

We are launched on a waveless ocean,
Lulled on the wide air's breast,
So straight, so swift, our motion,
It seems a vibrant rest.

A Vision of Flight

—Continued

See how the sun drops under!
Only the waters glow;
Earth is a world of wonder,
Dreaming in dusk below.

Now we float downward, slowly,
Through warmer, mistier air,
Wrapt in the influence holy
That far, free spaces bear;

This shall we lose, ah, never!
Since through the skies we've passed,
We are drawn to the light forever,
We have breathed—we have lived—at last!

The Leaves

IN the smoky, sultry haze,
In the mild mid-autumn weather,
The leaves are gathering, circling, dancing,
dropping down together.

They fall with a subtle sound,
With a dry, soft, fairy clamor,
They flash like flakes of yellow light, in the
veiled sun's dreamy glamour.

They drop around our feet,
They run, and whirl, and flutter;
Everywhere is their ghostly flight, and the
sighing song they utter.

Their song is as old as Time,
Old as the dream of dying;
It bears the moan of death-struck Life, and
the call of Hope replying.

And the flame of their golden hue
Is lit with the old-time fire
That shines on the somber brows of Death,
drawing the soul's desire.

This is the fall, the sigh—
Sad as the grave, yet tender,
Telling of life that is whirled along
in helpless, strange surrender.

This is the flight, the song,—
This is the autumn's story,—
The frost and the flame, and the flickering hope,
that points to an unknown glory.

Telephone Song

BY the magic of the wire,
By the force that mocks at space,
I can reach you, my Desire,
In your far place.

I can draw you, at my choice,
Close within my heart's control.
Oh, at will to hear your voice—
To feel your soul!

Oh, to pluck your golden speech
From the air, like drifting flowers!
Oh, to know you within reach
In silent hours!

Ever, without dread of change,
At a touch to draw you near!
Was there ever spell so strange,
Or boon so dear?

This—the slave of men's affairs,
Chained and prisoned mystery—
Is the golden road of prayers
For you—for me.

As we call through leagues of air—
We, whom space can never part—
Though with guarded words and spare,
I hear your heart!

The Song of the Easter Lilies

WE are the lilies, who mutely and graciously bring
Out of our sweet sheltered chambers, the message of
Spring;

'Mid the meek blossoms of April set stately and tall,
Queening it gently and musingly over them all;
Tenderly nurtured, and garnered with love and with
pride,

Flowers of worship and mystery, clothed as a bride;
We are the festival lilies, immortally fair,
Hear, then, the message we bring to the children of
care.

Have ye not known of our planting, bulbs shriveled
and stark,

Hidden away like the dead, in the dust and the dark,
Lying in deepest oblivion, children of doom,
Lost to the eyes that are eager for glory and bloom?
Have ye not known of our rising,—the stems that
unfold,

Mounting, and budding, and opening in whiteness and
gold?

We, of all witnesses, we are the chosen, the blest,
Rising most royally out of our patience and rest!
Heed, then, the message of Easter, ye children of care,
Told by the festival lilies, immortally fair.

If ye have given your dearest to silence and sleep,
If ye have buried your hopes, ah! so bitterly deep,
Look to our glory, and see, with awakening eyes,
How the lost beauty shall truly and gladly arise!
See, all around you, the lovely reviving of earth,
Flowing of sap and of water, new blooming and birth.
We, on your altars, are symbols of power and life,

The Song of the Easter Lilies

—Continued

Springing exultantly, free from old sorrow and strife;
Ponder us, then, as we give you the thrice-blessed
theme:

Man's resurrection is truer than longing and dream;
He who hath bade you consider our growth and our
bloom,

First-fruit of Death, has arisen from slumber and
gloom;

Ye with His life shall be quickened,—oh, listen and
hear!

Breathing in loveliness, bring we the song of the year!
Bring we the song that is solemn and tender and wise,
Message of Easter and Springtime:

YOUR DEAD SHALL ARISE!

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